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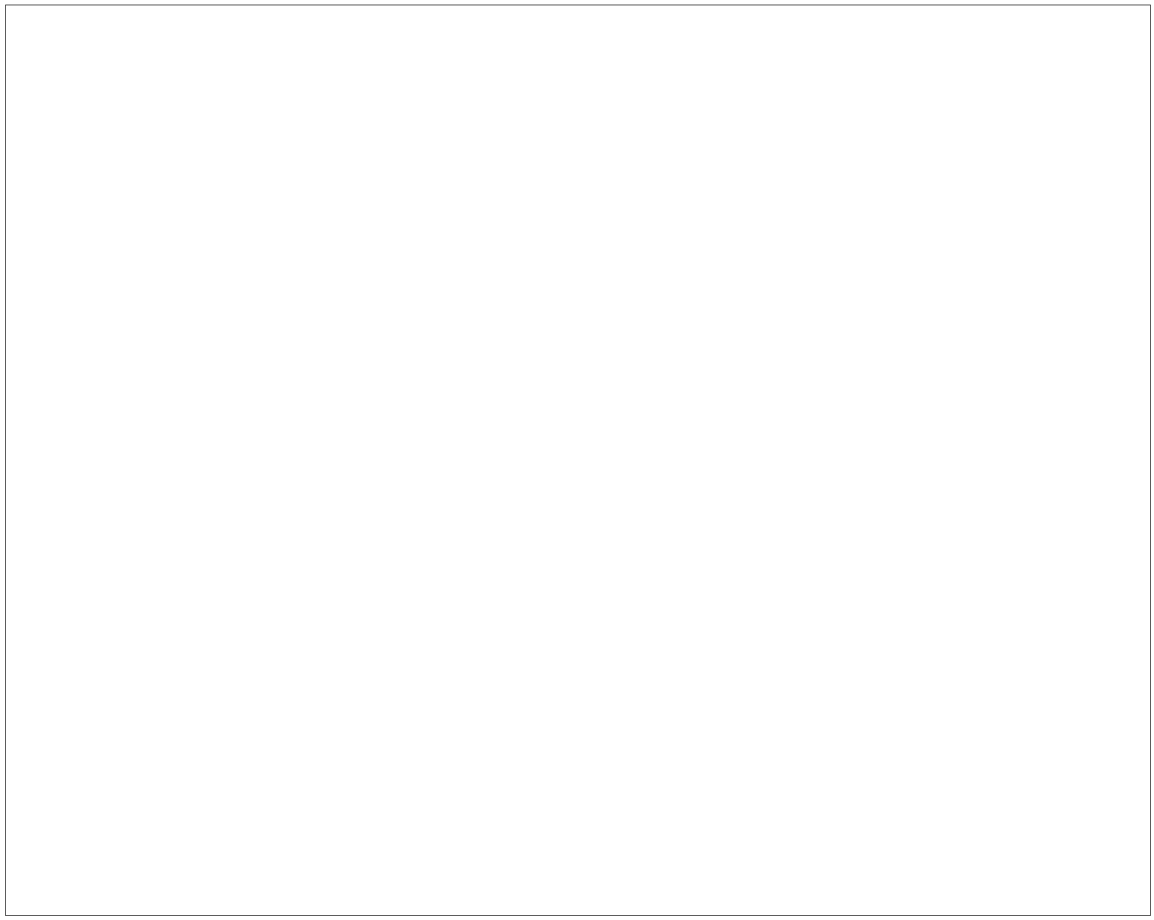

ARGENTINA: Government seeks to exclude left-wing Peronist coalition from provincial elections. (Page 17)

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ARGENTINA

The Argentine government is hoping to quash a newly formed left-wing Peronist coalition by excluding it from participation in a coming provincial election.

The Partido Descamisado, named after Juan Peron's "shirtless ones," recently announced that it would field candidates in the local elections scheduled for mid-April in Misiones. The elections, though relatively insignificant in national terms, will be the first in the country since 1973. Mrs. Peron's government will want to win by a safe margin.

The prime movers behind the new coalition are dissident youth groups--some with close ties to the underground Montonero guerrillas. Party spokesmen are raising issues that could appeal to a broad spectrum of the left. With the economy deteriorating--and likely to get worse--the coalition might also pick up a sizable protest vote.

Officials in Buenos Aires have a firm grip on the electoral machinery in Misiones and reportedly plan to disqualify the leftists on grounds that they lack legal recognition. The decision to move against the new organization was approved by Social Welfare Minister Lopez Rega--who is also Mrs. Peron's chief aide. His ire may have been provoked earlier this week when Descamisado leaders denounced as political opportunism an official announcement of major social welfare projects for the province.

Since Juan Peron's death, Peronist leaders have made no efforts to conciliate the left and, in fact, refuse to admit publicly that it has broken away from the Peronist movement. Their plans for Misiones, however, reflect a deep-seated fear that the left--if united--could do well in the balloting and be encouraged to contest other provincial races, as well as the presidential contest in 1977. [redacted] 3.5(c)



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